DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 527 HE 016 936

AUTHOR Loewenstein, Sophie Freud
TITLE Last Sabbatical: A Midlife Journey. College Teaching Monograph.
INSTITUTION North Dakota Univ., Grand Forks. Office of Instructional Development.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 25p.
AVAILABLE FROM University of North Dakota, Office of Instructional Development, Box 8161, University Station, Grand Forks, ND 58202.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Development; College Faculty; *Faculty Development; Higher Education; *Individual Development; Interpersonal Relationship; *Sabbatical Leaves; *Self Actualization
IDENTIFIERS *University of North Dakota Grand Forks

ABSTRACT

The views of a professor of social work about her sabbatical leave overseas as a point of transition in her academic career, and as an occasion for challenge and reflection in her life and work, are presented. She left to escape the pressures of duties, obligations, strictures, and expectations that surround a relatively successful academic career, as well as to learn new clinical social work skills and to gain in personal development. Issues concerning midlife, professional relationships, relationships between male and female clinicians, and separation from a familiar culture and personal ties are addressed. Philosophical, personal, and professional concerns are shared and illustrated by quotes from literature and philosophy. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED239527

COLLEGE TEACHING MONOGRAPH

Last Sabbatical - A Midlife Journey

by

Sophie Freud Loewenstein
Professor of Social Work
Simmons College
Boston, Massachusetts

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Published by
The Office of Instructional Development
University of North Dakota

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Office of Instructional Development, University of North Dakota

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Requests for copies
should be made to
Office of Instructional Development
Box 8161, University Station
Grand Forks, ND 58202

©1983, Sophie Freud Loewenstein
All Rights Reserved

HE 016 936

COLLEGE TEACHING MONOGRAPHS

This series of monographs has been produced to bring attention to significant ideas and developments in college teaching. The series allows college teachers at the University of North Dakota and elsewhere to share their insights and their experimentation with approaches to college level learning and instruction.

Each essay has been written to be interesting--and even helpful--to other college teachers. The authors, by putting their ideas and approaches in the public view, invite peer and citizen review. But above all, these essays give acknowledgement, even celebration, to excellence in college teaching.

You are invited to contribute to this monograph series with your own essay or by encouraging colleagues to write about their teaching. The Office of Instructional Development, at the University of North Dakota, provides editorial assistance in the preparation of each monograph. Each essay is reviewed by the editors and an editorial panel for quality of thought and experimentation and for interest to other college teachers.

We hope you enjoy this series.

Robert E. Young
Editor

Editor's Introduction

The issues of career, one's journey through it, and the place of career in one's life have always interested college teachers. Recent writing about adult development and crises of midlife and aging have drawn new attention to the academic career. Much of this writing is dry and pedantic, some is sensational. Too little is sensitive and provocative. This monograph by Sophie Freud Loewenstein is an exception. She writes autobiographically about her sabbatical leave in 1979 as a point of transition in her academic career, but more importantly as an occasion for challenge and reflection in her life and her work.

All who have read this paper in its review have been touched in some way by it: women and men, younger teachers and those closer to Sophie in age, those who have experienced their own sabbatical and those who have not. Sophie's life, her experiences and her purposes, though not our own, provide an occasion for us to think deeply about our lives and our work. Each who has read the paper recommends that it be read slowly and reflectively.

The Last Sabbatical - A Midlife Journey

by
Sophie Freud Loewenstein
Simmons College

> Was schert mich Weib, was schert mich Kind!
> . . . Lasz sie betteln gehn, wenn sie hungrig sind, -
>
> (Die Grenadiere, Heinrich Heine, 1837)

> Much of our lives is taken up with separations and new beginnings, exits and entries, departures and arrivals. Transitions are an intrinsic part of development, but they are often painful.
>
> (Levinson, 1980, p. 279)

> The private voice in the public sphere confirms our common experience through which we begin to assert ourselves.
>
> (Metzger, 1976, p. 408)

In the middle of my life I packed by bags, left my family, friends, students, and job, and went 3000 miles across the sea. I was not one of those shameful run-away wives about whom we read. I am, after all, a most honorable woman. I did not desert my home, never to return, although admittedly that thought had crossed my mind. I left on a legitimate, societally sanctioned trip, on a sabbatical I had duly earned after eight years of faithful academic service. Ever since adolescence I had worked while I went to school, and worked while I raised children, and driven myself relentlessly in search of illusive recognition. Suddenly I was presented with the fantastic and awesome gift of a whole year to do with as I pleased. I decided to leave town.

I left to escape the continuously escalating pressures of duties, obligations, strictures and expectations that gradually surround a relatively successful academic career. I left to learn some new clinical skills. I left in search of experiences and learnings different from those connected with my life of educator and public guru. I left to reconnect with my European past; to gain experiences that I had missed in life. I left to claim the carefree adolescence that had escaped me in my own adolescence, overshadowed by war, emigration, poverty and alienation.

Why should I write about an experience that touches only academics, a small elitist group in our society? I do so because with our new increasingly fluid and changing time-tables there are many people who experience similar life experiences. Some, like Kate Brown in Summer Before the Dark, have only a free summer.

Others may convalesce after an illness or drop out in adolescence (or at any age these days), go back to school as an adult, or have a similar "out of order" experience. I know a woman of thirty-five who is planning to take one day of her life, all for herself, some day. In her daydreams she plans the hours and minutes of that future day. Thus, many of us have had or will have the opportunity to experience a life interval where daily routines are interrupted and a reflective turning inward is both permitted and called for.

> . . . many people declare moratoria . . . . They also declare periods for the consolidation of psychological gains, periods for resting upon laurels after success, periods for personal trial or probation, periods for expiation of sins, periods for contemplation, periods for prolonged self-searching.
>
> (Strauss, 1962, p. 81)

Such an interval, however long or short, may recapitulate an entire life in microcosm. There is entrance into the new life, the decision how to spend the available time, the effort to wring meaning from one's chosen activities, and the eventual end of that interval, a form of death. Existential answers found during this time may allow one a glimpse of an alternate, more creative use of self, which may later become incorporated into one's other "real life" or, more likely, remain encapsulated as belonging to that unique and special time of freedom.

I have used current theories to order my experiences. In this one year I faced all the major issues that the social science literature attributes to midlife. I experienced the opposite, yet similar pulls of work and love (Smelser & Erikson, 1980); conflicts about use of time (Smelser, 1980; Neugarten, 1979; Levinson, 1979; Levinson, 1980); the need to recapture disowned aspects of the self (Fiske, 1980; Levinson, 1980; Gould, 1980; Neugarten 1979); changing life priorities and commitments (Fiske, 1980); changing identities (Strauss, 1962); and changing defensive patterns (Gould, 1980); the struggle for self-love (Gould, 1980; Levinson, 1979); the facing of such polarities as intimacy versus freedom (Neugarten, 1979); attachment versus separateness (Levinson, 1979); getting old versus remaining young (Levinson, 1979); and acknowledging both masculine and feminine aspects of the self (Levinson, 1979). I am adding the polarity of loving versus being loved and wooing versus being wooed. I will also discuss the well recognized midlife growth towards self-reflection and self-knowledge (Neugarten, 1979; Fiske, 1980). To highlight the similarities of many life issues for men and women, I have included literature on male development to comment on my own experiences.

I said that I left home in the middle of my life, but that is not true. I had already lived out 2/3 of my statistically alloted life span. Thus, there was not only the problem of using creatively one particular life interval, but also the knowledge that this would be the last life interval in which my aging body was still holding up and that I did not yet quite embody the identity of "An Old Woman." It was indeed a last chance to realize those unlived adventures, to solve those unsolved problems, to escape the multiple constraints of mature adulthood, a last chance to be YOUNG (Levinson, 1979, p. 210). It was a time invested with all the passion and poignancy of an experience that is thus defined. My particular use of this life interval will thus reflect the issues faced by a professional woman who enters late midlife, the last ten working years of her official career.

Leaving

I had spent my adolescence in three different language communities and as many continents, longing for a stable, secure, and settled life. For many years I had not wished to travel. It was more important for me to establish roots, a sense of being needed, a sense of belonging and of becoming a valued member of a family, a school and even of a whole professional community. And then suddenly, in late middle life, after having attained to some measure all those hard striven-for goals, they started to feel unbelievably oppressive. I felt captured by all the people who loved and admired me, by the very people who had given meaning to my life. And I decided to leave them all - for a while.

> Three days earlier he was still at home. In his house, with a woman both gentle and melancholy. And colleagues, some friendly, some envious. Smiles, flatteries and half-truths. Always the same questions, the same answers. The same burdens, the same alibis. Suddenly he felt like leaving it all. Without a word. Leave. For a few days. Or a few years. And breathe. And remain silent; remain silent at last.
>
> (Wiesel, 1965, p. 65)

"I am going abroad for a sabbatical," I said loud and clear, never believing that I could do it. "Your place is with your husband and children," said my old mother whose place had never been particularly with her husband or children. "Please don't do anything crazy or irrational," wrote my brother whose life had been impoverished by lack of enterprise. "Of course you won't do this," said my worst friend, "you are much too responsible to leave all those people here who count and depend on you." "Your regular visits have been the joy and comfort of these last ten years," said my increasingly paralyzed invalid friend. "Far Out," said my daughter. My husband said nothing, being a quiet man of few words. And in the midst of envious

and disapproving and encouraging colleagues, friends, and family members, I realized that they all took my announcement seriously and would let me leave. My children were, of course, all adult and living their own lives. Please believe me that I am an honorable woman, and I have always been a most painfully conscientious mother.

Settling Down

Arriving in a strange city always reminds me of the days when I was 13 years old, having freshly arrived in Paris after emigrating from Vienna, and having lost overnight an entire community of family and friends. It was a time when I transformed myself from a little girl who cried every time someone looked crossly at her, to a determined survivor. This change from an interpersonal commitment to life to a competence/mastery and self-protective commitment (Fiske, 1980) was a useful transformation, but it had exacted a price in my life. It is perhaps not accidental that my return to Europe would later revive this early intense interpersonal commitment, with its greater openness and vulnerabilities.

Once again I became a frightened little girl, needing to learn the value of foreign money, the secrets of a new transportation system. Even the intricacies of making a telephone call seemed difficult to master. Nevertheless, this time I entered the new setting with a lifetime of emotional and intellectual resources behind me. It had always been part of my agenda to re-experience the old traumas of adaptation to a foreign culture, but under circumstances that I knew I could master. This happened - but not instantly.

For many weeks I watched myself walking around the big city, mechanically visiting places of interest, faithfully attending work assignments and conferences, and feeling NOTHING AT ALL. In spite of the fact that my colleagues were friendly enough, they were also essentially indifferent strangers. For some reason I could no longer remember, I had left a whole city full of friends and deliberately exposed myself to an alien environment. My depersonalization was great enough to eclipse ordinary feelings of loneliness. I missed no one, cared about no one, and I needed nothing.

Illness

Soon after that I became ill. Fortunately, I continued to be able to get out of bed every morning and attend the clinic where I had, in spite of being a marginal member, a definitely assigned place and defined role. I could not have stayed abroad without some membership in a social system.

Like the illness of the heroine of Summer Before the Dark, mine was similarly mysterious, lingering and debilitating.

> . . . she was sure she would die, hoped that she would and by the time she reached London was sustained only by thinking of her own bed, in her own room, with its flowered curtains . . . - oh she could not wait to be back in her own home, with possibly even one of the children back from somewhere and able to help her.
>
> (Lessing, 1973, p. 133)

Kate Brown understood that she could not return home at this time of her life, and neither could I consider such a solution. I imagined that my extreme weakness and multiple system infections were an indication of leukemia, and I too was prepared to die. It seemed like a possibility that I could finally contemplate without unbearable anguish. It was certainly easier than going home with an abysmal sense of failure. Never again did I want to be a dependent little girl who needs other people to take care of her. Besides, I no longer remembered those people at home. Eventually my illness was diagnosed as mononucleosis which served the purpose of relieving my anxiety and helping me to get well.

Time

Once we start counting time as "time left to live" (Neugarten, 1968, p. 97) rather than as time from the beginning, it becomes a most precious commodity, the starkest most irrevocable constraint under which we live. The decision on how to use my sabbatical was thus invested with all the panic of contemplating the unaccomplished in a view of a dwindling lifetime. I faced this panic a few weeks after settling down in my new community. I had taken 25 books with me, a mere selection from years of mental book lists . . . if ever I shall have more time to read. In addition, I had taken along the raw research data of a study from which I was to write a book. And suddenly I was faced with the realization that if I wanted to live in and explore my new setting, I would neither have time to read my 25 books, nor to write my own book, and that I would not even have time to become an expert in the professional skills that I had hoped to acquire in this overseas clinic. Besides, I suddenly wanted to read different books, not the ones I had brought along, and not even books that would eventually be useful for my teaching.

For years I had led a life totally regulated by the clock, with an obsessive attempt to waste neither hours, nor even minutes, and suddenly all that had changed.

> The hours flew by. He wasn't aware of time. Before, it had filled him with anguish. Time-conscious? More than that: time-obsessed. Not any more. He was living outside time. No clock, no obligations. No

> need to pretend being busy, entertained, interested, moved. He would get up and go to sleep whenever he chose.
>
> (Wiesel, 1965, p. 108)

For two weeks I wrestled with the decision to return home and to continue the path of frantic productivity that would eventually lead to true achievement and glory, the ultimate proof that I was a worthwhile human being. Then, with the help of my advisor - oh what joy to be able to turn to a woman who was older and wiser than I - I resolved TO BE rather that TO DO.

> He lives more in the present and gains more satisfaction from the process of living - from being rather than doing and having.
>
> (Levinson, 1979, p. 242)

If Being was too alien to my accustomed life-style, I could at least experiment with new ways of Doing. I decided to interrupt the goal-directed work projects that had been governing my life. You must know by now that I am an honorable woman, and I certainly did continue to write a few papers, and teach some courses, and pursue the clinical work at hand, but these activities, compared to my usual tempo, amounted to taking one huge vacation. Essentially I allowed myself to waste nine months of the 56th year of my life. It was the most generous and extravagant gift that I had granted myself in my life journey toward self-love.

It was only after I reached this decision that I found in myself the freedom to value and enjoy the many opportunities for learning that my new community could offer me.

Paying My Way

When one has participated in a social system for a while, debts and credits become embedded in a network of mutual privileges and obligations, but when one enters a new system, decisions on how to pay one's way must be made. I had been accepted in a clinical training program and assigned a position halfway between staff and trainee. My teaching responsibilities in the program helped me to sustain continuity with my identity as an educator, but my double status also created some confusion and uncertainty for me. Above all, I felt myself to be a graciously accepted guest who was taking up one of a limited number of learning places. The need to repay my hosts for their hospitality and to establish myself as a contributing member of this host community, thus justifying their generous welcome, was always in my mind.

I realize now that I was only replaying my customary life stance. It might be surprising to people who know my self-assertive manner, to learn that truly I do not have a great sense of entitlement. I am used to keeping track of my debts, perhaps

because of having incurred in adolescence the enormous debt of becoming a guest-refugee in the United States rather than being killed in the Holocaust. In my meetings in Europe with my brother, my old Fraulein in Vienna, and friends from childhood and adolescence I continue to marvel at the wonder and triumph of our having survived the war. We are a generation of survivors. This is an integral part of my identity.

On some level I continue to be grateful to every institution that has given me a place, every school that has accepted me as a student or teacher. I try to "pay my way" within my abilities. It is not always admirable to pay one's way, and since opposites tend to be the same, my mental bookkeeping has an ungenerous quality, and clashes with my critical, rebellious and revolutionary self. As a member of a social system I pay my way through emotional engagement, manifested at the lowest level, by my effort to keep everyone provoked, awake and alive. I lend my energy and vitality to the people and activities which intersect with my life.

While the wish and hope to be NEEDED has thus been a driving force in my life, the fulfillment of this wish has created resentment and a sense of being exploited, used and overused by my human community. I thus went abroad to escape being "used up" and once I became established, I systematically started to escape the very anonymity which I had sought out so eagerly. I set out to become a significant member of my new community.

Power and Passion

My home and community has accorded me not only respect and affection, but a feeling that I am a woman of power - a most confidence-building and sustaining self-concept in middle life. I never experienced an antithesis between the exercise of power and love (Levinson, 1979, p. 228) or even between power and femininity (Rubin, 1979, p. 64), although others may view my need to take charge and "get things done" (Levinson, 1979, p. 232) as a masculine trait. My concern about power was to understand whether it was simply a loan from my community, or whether I could count on it as an integral part of myself. I had sufficient self-doubts not to rely on my own resources. In packing my bags, I needed to take along my academic titles, my publications and my famous maiden name. Some of this baggage I even sent ahead; I wanted to be well received by my new community.

Fortunately or unfortunately such ornaments gain entrance, but no more. Recognition and respect need to be earned in each new setting.

> I was in a Gestalt workshop with a very effective woman leader of my age and she turned to me and asked: "Why are you looking me over like that?"
> "I am interested in watching another woman guru in action," I replied.

> "Another, how many do you meet?" "I am the other one," said I. There was much derisive laughter in the group. Clearly my unfair claim to power was creating resentment and incredulity.

Must I thus conclude that power is not something that I HAVE, but rather something that my social network accords me, to be used as long as I serve it well? And yet, by the time I had left my foreign setting, I had reinstated myself as a woman of power.

My new role of trainee reminded me of what it means to be a student (a person of low power) and of the kind of risks that this role entails. There is the risk of asking challenging questions that might provoke resentment and ostracism; the risk of making demands and being seen as a person with excessive entitlement; the risk that one's knowledge and experience may remain unrecognized or become devalued. As a teacher of adult students who come to study after some years of successful work, I found it enormously useful to experience for myself the sense of powerlessness, helplessness, fear of exposure, and fear of displeasing authority that students confront. My students had tried to convey this to me, but I had forgotton such feelings and they had seemed unreal. I am happy that my empathy and sensitivity to their vulnerabilities has thus increased.

Having resolved the transitional crisis of adapting to a different use of time (or use of self) and after feeling well again, I emerged with a renewed surge toward life, energy and zest. I recaptured my usual passionate self. It is quite possible in life to sit back and hope that engaging things might happen. This is not my way. I am willing to make things happen. I am willing to work very hard to make them happen.

Do others of my age experience much of the time a burning fire that must be spent in order to be contained? I turn with relief to the words of an 82 year old Jungian analyst who felt similarly, at least in old age:

> Another secret we carry is that though drab outside - wreckage to the eye mirrors a mortification - inside we flame with a wild life that is almost incommunicable. . . . It is a place of fierce energy. Perhaps passion . . . . It is just life; the natural intensity of life . . . .
>
> (Scott-Maxwell, 1968, p. 32)

Thus, in spite of the liberating nature of relinquishing for the moment my compulsive drive to work, I still needed to fill my life with challenges. It is fortunate that we are starting to recognize that love and work are, after all, not activities that call for different facets of the self.

> In the light of these evident similarities between the processes of working and loving it might be appropriate to regard the two as different names for a very similar process of human adaptation, both involving a fusion of the different psychic forces - impulse, discipline or control, integration, and object attachment . . . in fact the two orientations are so inextricably meshed that it becomes difficult to distinguish between them. For example one can love one's work, and one can - indeed, is well advised to work at love.
>
> (Smelser, 1980, pp. 5, 105)

Friendships

I used to think that it took years of acquaintanceship and many hours of rapprochement to build a solid and lasting friendship. As my life gets rapidly shorter, I realize that, at least while traveling, it need not take that long. It is possible for two people who trust each other to connect quite deeply in a short period of time, and when a certain critical point is reached, lasting bonds may be established with a potential future renewal of the relationship. I am happy to feel that I established friendships that will permanently enrich the fabric of my life. Through those multiple relationships in many parts of the world, I have renewed my world citizenship.

> As a man becomes more individuated, and more oriented to the self, a process of detribalization occurs.
>
> (Levinson, 1979, p. 241)

Reconciliation in midlife takes place on many levels. After traveling to Austria and Germany, I established deeply significant relationships with German colleagues, and recaptured with intense pleasure the language of my childhood. Warm encounters in Israel strengthened simultaneously my Jewish identity. My self-esteem now encompasses the fate of many people in different countries and my sense of world interdependence is no longer a theoretical concept.

Asking Good Questions

Over the years I had built up a large, extended, and solid network of friendships with women. We dare to burden each other with fears and sorrows, offering reflection, support and practical help in times of stress. We confide our murderous fantasies against our "loved ones," and we care about each other's physical well-being.

> With one friend of my age we cheerfully exchange the worst symptoms and our black dreads as well.
>
> (Scott-Maxwell, 1968, p. 31)

We even forgive each other for our triumphs, gracefully expressing whatever envy gets aroused. However, with family, friends, and students all competing for my

limited time, I found neither time, energy, nor inclination to initiate new and perhaps challenging relationships. I had come to feel that my friendship was a coveted prize that would be honored and appreciated. I had become accustomed to being wooed. But deep down I am a woman who would rather woo that be wooed. My temporary unmet needs for human connections, affirmation and caring allowed me to develop that part of myself, since it led me to take exceptional risks in reaching out to people. I approached the task of building a network of human relationships with all the energy, talents, and excesses that I had used in the working world.

It was an exciting challenge to practice wooing in foreign places, and my efforts were well rewarded. As I traveled through the world, I had two powerful memberships that facilitated my opportunity to connect with other women. There was my honorable membership in the international social work community, a community whose interest and willingness to extend itself to me I deeply appreciated. And second, there was my identity as a woman who can identify with, and non-judgmentally accept, most experiences that women face. Above all, there was my ability to be present for others, my wish to learn from them and hence my willingness to ask them questions that they had hoped for a long time to be asked.

> When I am with other people I try to find them, or try to find a point in myself from which to make a bridge to them, or walk on egg-shells of affection trying not to hurt or misjudge.
>
> (Scott-Maxwell, 1968, p. 14)

Mothers and Daughters

I found very soon that in my new community, as had been true at home, young women were seeking my friendship.

> Some of the issues of middle age . . . include the need to nurture and to act as model, guide or mentor to the young.
>
> (Neugarten, 1979, p. 890)

Professional midlife women of my generation do not merely mentor a few young people as do professional men (Levinson, 1979, pp. 251-255), but instead we have to be guide, permission giver, and inspiration for a whole generation of young women who are seeking new models.

> Who are the matriarchs - the Demeters? They can't be the mothers who socialized us to accept Pluto. Are they the lonely giants who shimmer mirage-like in the garbage heaps of male knowledge and acceptance? Anais Nin, Margaret Mead, Eleanor Roosevelt, Greta Garbo, Eva Curie? Who is there to be like?
>
> (Cooper, 1979, p. 32)

Young women have rejected their mothers' traditional life-styles and need our help in finding new ways of living a good life in a changing unpredictable society. Confusion is increased because they have often been caught between their mothers' contradictory missions. They must justify and make up for the failures and disappointments in their mothers' lives, and yet do so without taking undue risks, without flaunting the social order. "You can be anything you really want to be . . . (but) don't go too far" (Rich, 1976, p. 248, also Rubin, 1979, p. 43 and Stierlin, 1972). Women of all ages recognize in me that potential "counter-mother" who might give them permission and courage to lead a truly different life. Since I have lost, long ago, all convictions about the one and only good life that is to be found, I can sometimes meet their needs. However, I too feel myself to have been a badly-mothered daughter.

> But the motherless woman may also react by denying her own vulnerability, denying she has felt any loss or absence of mothering. She may spend her life proving her strength in the "mothering" of others . . . mothering men . . ., whose weakness makes her feel strong, or mothering in the role of teacher, doctor, psychotherapist.
>
> (Rich, 1976, p. 243)

My mother's triple legacy has weighed heavily on me all my life. I had to earn the public recognition that she so desperately wanted and without which she could not love herself. I had to carry out her vengeance against her husband's famous name, and yet I had to honor this name which was after all such a strong base for her own self-respect. I have been a most dutiful daughter at least in these respects, within my ability, but my yearning for a good fantasy mother has been a lifelong search.

> I wanted another mother . . . when I was young. I wanted a mother who liked herself, who liked her body and so would like mine . . . my mother did not like herself . . . that is part of the definition of who she was and who I am. She was my mother.
>
> (MacDonald, 1979, p. 13)

At the age of fifty-six years, I was still seeking a woman who would not only be a model of intellectual achievements, but one who might also show me that it is safe to become old, and that it might even be possible to die with a sense of peace. She would need to be a woman who loved herself well enough, and would love me well enough, but not too much, since she had to remain confortably distant and separate. Finding such a woman and wooing her with a passion and wisdom became the most challenging and ultimately joyful pursuit of my sabbatical year.

Reconciliation

It is possible to fall in love with children, women, men, activities, or ideas. I fell in love with two human beings during my sabbatical, and one of them was my 85 year old Aunt. I knew that if I could win her love and receive her blessing, I could forgive my father and come to terms with the heavy legacy of the Freud family.

> He may feel he was cheated or done in by the tribe during early adulthood. If as a youngster he broke away from his origins he may now attempt some form of rapprochement.
>
> (Levinson, 1979, p. 242)

Although neither my Aunt nor I were aware that each felt disappointed or even betrayed by the other, it turned out that there was indeed much to be forgiven. I learned through others that she had felt bitterness that I had not become a psychoanalyst, or at least asked to study in her clinic. I, in turn, felt that my powerful family had expelled me from their ranks and abandoned me during the war. Family therapists encourage family members to discuss their grievances so they can come to forgive each other. This was not the path we took. Forgiving can take many forms.

My initial goals were modest. I wanted her to give me a cup of tea and give me a kiss. The effort of telephoning repeatedly when I felt such an unwelcome burden caused me much anguish. But I brought to my quest a lifetime of being loved and accepted by many human beings, an optimism about my ability to reach people, and an inner conviction of the importance and purity of my mission. I planned the campaign of winning my old Aunt's guarded heart with no less care than Napoleon must have planned the campaign of Waterloo, but Napoleon lost his campaign of destruction, while I won my campaign of love. She wrote: "I shall try to still be there for you when you return to visit next year."

Mothering Men

The campaign to establish significant relationships with the men who unexpectedly intersected with my life abroad proved to be as challenging as the campaign for my Aunt's love. I had, of course, become aware of the lack of talent or interest in friendship among many middle class men (Levinson, 1978, p. 335; Schlossberg & Kent, 1979, p. 280). "You seem to have made more friends in this city in half a year than I have in the last forty years," said my brother to me in an envious tone. Although he would like to be my friend and is faithful and loyal to me, he is unwilling, perhaps afraid, to know me, to see me or to hear me. Friendship with him was therefore difficult.

As a woman who has taken strong feminist stands in my teaching and writing, my major emotional commitments had always been to women. Although I had worked with men, as students and colleagues, and some of them even call me their friend, none of my relationships with men had lived up to my friendship requirements of mutual openness, caring, availability and support, as had my relationships with women. I wondered whether friendship between men and women was possible.

We worked in small clinical teams and I was assigned to work with two male colleagues and one male supervisor, all three of whom could have been my sons, at least if I had been a sexually precocious teenager, which, alas, I was not.

I feel embarrassed and ashamed to admit that I was not satisfied to take the role of equal colleague in this group.

> . . . it was noticeable that when she was absent from the committee things did not go smoothly . . . for no other reason than that she was unable to switch herself out of the role of provider of invisible mana, consolation, warmth, sympathy . . . . She had been set like a machine by twenty odd years of being a wife and mother.
>
> (Lessing, 1973, pp. 45, 46)

Was it my needs or those of the three men which made me become responsible for the running and welfare of this little family? I tried to create group solidarity, assured communication between members, and became their nurturing, supportive mother and their critical, praising, and challenging teacher. The men accepted my input, rewarding me with the affection and appreciation due to a good mother/teacher while being relatively oblivious to my separate identity, including my needs, hopes, fears, and wishes. Of course, they were not that sensitive to each other's needs either.

> Not having to maintain a rigid division between work . . . and personal relationships, he can combine work and friendship in various admixtures.
>
> (Levinson, 1978, p. 237)

Being a woman, and in midlife, I disrupted the rigid boundaries between work and friendship that these younger men had set up. There were times when the effort to reach out to these distant men wearied me. But the pleasure of taking care of, of teaching, and of being accepted by three attractive, intelligent, young foreign men far outweighed other considerations.

The men in the group had not asked me to take over this role. I did it eagerly and gratefully, and would do it again, given a similar opportunity. It was a sobering encounter with my pseudo-feminism when I found myself reaching out to men with

more warmth and persistence than I usually display when initiating friendships with women.

> The gap between intellectual acceptance of new roles and emotional comfort is often a difficult one to close.
>
> (Lemkau, 1980, p. 131; also Rubin, 1979, pp. 63-64)

Of course, I also grew to love a man in my life abroad. I perceived him as both engaging and distant, sensitive to feelings and afraid of them, alternately confirming and disconfirming, and perhaps vulnerable in spirit and body. He was thus a complex and interesting human being. We met in mutual massive projections. He admired me with all the ambivalence that this entails. We occasionally worked together, and exchanged creative ideas. I was charmed by his ability to sometimes hear what was meant rather than said. We also had some conflicting views, and the possibility arose that we might clash. I was older than he, and my voice was louder. So I fell in love with him, and the danger passed. Voluntarily I took on the masochistic position of an aging woman who loves a man who is not there for her. He did not ask me many questions, except now and then - important occasions. He said, "It is useful to discuss one's work with an objective observer." He also said, "Some people come and go, but others leave a deep impact."

It would have made me extremely happy to experience with this man, who was not my husband, some mutual openness, a loving friendship, perhaps some expressions of tenderness. He did not allow any of these things to happen. I am an honorable woman, and I did not want to bed down with him; nevertheless, the threat of breaking the incest taboo hovered over our relationship. Was he immobilized by my urgent wooing? My forceful style is uncomfortable for many, especially for men who fear to be controlled by women. Perhaps, however, it was simply not in this man's life plan to connect with a foreign woman. I too met my Waterloo after all. Being honorable did not save me from pain, a piercing pain that lasted and lasted. This is the price I paid for ridiculously falling in love at the 2/3 mark of my life. I lived in a state of semi-intoxication for months and months. It was certainly worth the price. Is that the face of midlife love?

I concluded that I, as an older woman, possessed what was needed to reach out to men in love or friendship. An enormous amount of self-love, an equally firm belief in the hidden affective possibilities of the men in question, and a readiness to be rejected and have my motives profoundly misunderstood. It was thus quite easy.

> Women are brought up to self-disclose and share feelings in both friendship and sexual relations, while men are socialized to do things with friends and to restrict emotional sharing to sexual relationships.
>
> (Lemkau, 1980, p. 121)

Actually I am quite ready to become a mother, teacher, or informal therapist to men. These are roles I often take on with women as well; they are enjoyable and familiar roles.

Men and Women

The struggle and eventual opportunity to form friendships with men was highly gratifying. However, while I worked and played with men while I was abroad, and loved some of them in various ways, it was women who were willing "to ask me questions" and who were there for me. There was my older advisor who sustained me through the successive crises of arrival, illness, grief and departure; there were my younger women friends in the support group that we built for ourselves, who gave me the consensual validation that meant so much to me; and there was a special friend, a temporary daughter, who helped me pack when my coping capacities were strained with multiple leave-taking, carried my baggage and accompanied me to the airport. And yet, there were significant incidents during my travels, which held out the possibility that the souls of women and men can sometimes meet.

> The first day in a new town fills me not with joyous and curious enterprise but with dread and alienation. I am waiting for an evening conference and a long and lonely afternoon stretches before me. I walk into a student cafeteria and settle near a young man who sits alone. "I am a stranger in this town," I say to him, "and I feel lost and lonely. Would you talk to me a little about yourself?" He startles for only a minute and then comes to sit next to me. He is writing his dissertation on a subject close to my own field. We are both eager to exchange perspectives and information. He is delighted to be speaking to such an interesting American professor. The town has become a friendly place. A single person can humanize an entire city.
>
> A letter comes to me in the mail from a Frenchman whom I had known in my youth. He had found me through a newspaper article. We agreed to meet. We had met during the war years in Casablanca, where he, a non-Jew, had escaped from the Germans. He was living there with a foster family who was hosting him until he could join the French forces abroad. Later, he had to leave this foster family without ever thanking them and this was now haunting him. Last year his son had died in a car accident. He had contracted a progressive bone disease and had chosen early retirement. He was a quiet man in profound despair. We spent a day together and I said little. But I did encourage him to contact his family in Morocco, which was easy enough. Later

> he writes to me: "I have gone to Morocco to thank Mr. and Mrs. C., 85 and 95 years old. We had a large and joyous family reunion. When I came back I felt so much better that I returned to work part-time. Meeting you again changed my life."

All of us have had experiences in which our presence in someone's life, or theirs in ours, however ephemeral it might have seemed, made a profound difference. Our mutual interdependence for emotional survival is truly awesome. Perhaps we can strive to build a world in which women and men do not have to live in separate compartments, in which we do not need to own our spouses possessively and prefer overloading our marital relationships rather than risking cross-gender friendships. In such a world we could learn to give to each other, and more risky, ask favors from each other. We may not want as much from each other as we initially fear.

Attached and Separate

I had solved the terror of my aloneness in late adolescence by finding a mate who was my kin in every way. As German Jewish immigrants, we had already met in France, and we had a deep understanding of each other's life experiences. We formed a tight partnership and together we built quite a good life for ourselves, exorcising the ghosts of strangeness in a new country, poverty and loneliness.

In middle life I longed for the experience of living alone. In our coupled society the needs for separateness are dangerous to express. They are taboo needs that married women must deny and suppress. I would feel even more guilty and deviant if I had not encountered similar feelings in other women, expressed in secrecy and with shame.

> I wonder if living alone makes one more alive. No precious energy goes in disagreements or compromise. No need to augment others, there is just yourself, just truth - a morsel - and you.
>
> (Scott-Maxwell, 1968, p. 33)

The freedom to plan one's life without consideration for another human being can be liberating; the freedom to come home in the evening, or to stay out and see a movie, a play or visit with a friend; the freedom to eat an evening meal or skip it; to go to sleep at 7:00 p.m. without explanation or to stay up most of the night to watch the late show.

> He would get up and go to sleep whenever he chose. No one would ask: Where were you? Or: Whom did you see? Or: Why are you late? No one would try to make him forget or remember. He would be alone at dusk and still alone at dawn. Not like a prisoner in his cell; like a fugitive in the forest.
>
> (Wiesel, 1965, p. 108)

I treasured the time alone, the quiet evenings after a busy day full of people. I was even glad when I found that I could not get a telephone, thus gaining even more protection for my solitude when I wanted it. As much as I had feared loneliness when I was young, I now needed aloneness in middle life.

> . . . he can draw more upon his inner resources and is thus less dependent on external stimulation. He enjoys solitude more since he has internal company . . .
>
> (Levinson, 1979, p. 242)

I was jealous of these nine months of total independence and asked my family and friends not to visit me, although I appreciated our correspondence. I had taken nine months of my life to be separate, and I wanted no one to step on this piece of time that was all mine. I also valued my single state because it gave me an opportunity to relate to the world not as a couple, but as a single woman who could meet others in face to face encounters. My single or divorced friends who envy my married state tell me I could only enjoy my singleness because it was temporary and unreal. That is probable, since it is, of course, both Separateness and Attachment that we need. I have always admired DeBeauvoir and Sartre as one couple who have managed both. I want to give honest testimony to my somewhat ruthless and unwomanly drive for autonomy and independence in middle life. Perhaps this drive for separateness may be a factor in midlife divorces. Perhaps our society needs to make provisions to meet these midlife needs without having to sever longtime human bonds (Neugarten, 1979, p. 889).

Coming Home

> By the time it was all over with, she would certainly not have chosen it for herself in advance, for she did not have the experience to choose, or the imagination . . . . Choose? Do I ever choose? Have I ever chosen?
>
> (Lessing, 1973, p. 6)

Once again I am in a strange town, but this time it is the one where I have spent most of my adult life. I sit among the trees while the gipsy moths are eating all their leaves, and their bark, and the bushes and the flowers. The trees are dying and in the silence I can hear the crunching of the caterpillars and the falling of their droppings like a continuous rain.

I am faced with the loss of a whole community of people in which I had invested my emotions. I wait for the mail, and I am relieved when letters arrive. It is my only proof that I have not invented the whole experience,that it was not a mere dream about a reckless carefree vacation. Like other dreams, it is about to disappear.

My friends tell me that they missed me and that I will feel better soon. They are strangers, and they do not understand me.

I do not remember the joys and satisfactions that I found in my former life. Will life consist of teaching more and more courses and writing more and more papers?

> When a man confronts the realization that his occupational career has peaked, not only is he likely to feel anxious and insecure, but he may be prompted to reflect on his work life in terms of such questions as "What was it all for?"
>
> (Fiske, 1980, p. 247)

The meaning of my life has escaped me and I cannot recapture it. I need to settle down and age with dignity, but it is hard to grow up.

> Good things have gone, and some good things will always go when new things come and we mourn. We mourn rightly for the outlook is . . . uncertain, perhaps very dark.
>
> (Scott-Maxwell, 1968, p. 86)

And yet this morning the piercing pain had receded. When I found myself waking up with the beating heart I had known for years, I knew that my life would go on. I had to finish my reading lists by the end of the month, give an interview later in the day and read a book for a promised review. My community had not replaced me while I was gone and they expected me to step back into all the places that were left open. Is such a relentless life really the only way to ward off depression? Life is still grey, but I can bear to live it. I am a married, honorable woman who lives in this town, and I have some work to do.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Carruth, James. Crises: An Abstract Model versus Individual Experience. In: Nancy Datan and Leon Ginsberg, eds., Life-Span Developmental Psychology. New York: Academic Press, 1975.

Cooper, Baba. Notes from the Fifty-ninth Year. Sinister Wisdom, 10, Summer 1979, pp. 9-14.

Fiske, Marjorie. Changing Hierarchies of Commitment in Adulthood. In: Neil J. Smelser and Erik H. Erikson, eds., Themes of Work and Love in Adulthood. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Giele, Janet Zollinger. Adulthood as Transcendence of Age and Sex. In: Neil J. Smelser and Erik H. Erikson, eds., Themes of Work and Love in Adulthood. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Gould, Roger. Transformations During Early and Middle Adult Years. In: Neil J. Smelser and Erik H. Erikson, eds., Themes of Work and Love in Adulthood. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Heine, Heinrich. Die Grenadiere. In Heines Sämtliche Werke. Erster Band. Leipzig: Der Tempel Verlag. Third edition.

Lemkau, Jeanne Parr. Women and Employment: Some Emotional Hazards. In: Carol Landau Heckerman, ed., The Evolving Female. NY: Human Sciences Press, 1980.

Lessing, Doris. The Summer Before the Dark. Bantam Books, 1973.

Levinson, Daniel J. Toward a Conception of the Adult Life Course. In: Neil J. Smelser and Erik H. Erikson, eds., Themes of Work and Love in Adulthood. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

------; Darrow, Charlotte; Klein, Edward; Levinson, Maria; and McKee, Braxton. The Seasons of Man's Life. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1978.

Loewenstein, Sophie Freud. The Challenge and Passion of Teaching. Harvard Educational Review, 50(1), Feb. 1980, pp. 1-12.

MacDonald, Barbara. Do You Remember Me? Sinister Wisdom, 10, Summer 1979, pp. 9-14.

Mann, Thomas. The Magic Mountain. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1927.

Metzger, Deena. It is Always the Woman Who is Raped. American Journal of Psychiatry, 133(4), April 1976, pp. 405-408.

Neugarten, Bernice. The Awarness of Middle Age. In: B. Neugarten, ed., Middle Age and Aging. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

------. Time, Age and the Life Cycle. The American Journal of Psychiatry, 136(7), July 1979, pp. 887-894.

Rich, Adrienne. Of Woman Born. New York: W. W. Norton, 1976.

Rubin, Lillian B. Women of a Certain Age. New York: Harper & Row, 1979.

Schlossberg, Nancy K. and Kent, Laura. Effective Helping with Women. In: S. Eisenberg and L. Patterson, eds., Helping Clients with Special Concerns. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Co., 1979.

Schwerin, Doris. Diary of a Pigeon Watcher. New York: William Morrow & Co., 1976.

Scott-Maxwell, Florida. The Measure of my Days. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1968.

Smelser, Neil J. Vicissitudes of Work and Love in Anglo-American Society. In: Neil J. Smelser and Erik H. Erikson, eds., Themes of Work and Love in Adulthood. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Stierlin, Helm. Separating Parents and Adolescents. New York: Quadrangle, 1974.

------; Rücker-Embden; Wetzel, Norbert; and Wirsching, Michael. The First Interview with the Family. New York: Brunner/Mazel, 1980.

Strauss, Anselm. Transformations of Identity. In: Arnold Rose, ed., Human Behavior and Social Processes. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1962.

Wiesel, Elie. One Generation After. New York: Random House, 1965.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Sophie Freud Loewenstein is Professor of Social Work at Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts. She has written extensively and effectively about social work, psychotherapy, and college teaching. Her article, "The Passion and Challenge of Teaching," in the Harvard Education Review, may be of special interest to other college teachers.

Sophie has become a special friend and colleague to many at the University of North Dakota, since she first shared her Last Sabbatical paper with us. She has lectured on the campus, and continues to be an example of an accomplished academic woman, sensitive teacher, and caring human being.